The great Sin of withholding Corn; and the Duties of all Men in Times of Scarcity.

TWO

DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL OF THE ASYLUM

FOR

FEMALE ORPHANS;

ON

SUNDAY the 8th, and SUNDAY the 15th of NOVEMBER, 1795.

BY THE

REV. SEPTIMUS HODSON, M. B.

Rector of THRAPSTON, Chaplain of the ASYLUM, and Chaplain in ordinary to his ROYAL HIGHNESS the PRINCE of WALES.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The followiug Diſcourſes were compoſed, and preached, with a view to general exhortation and inſtruction,---with the view of calling off the minds of men from unavailing complaints, and diſpiriting apprehenſions, to the ſerious conſideration and earneſt practice of their reſpective duties. They are now publiſhed in the cheapeſt poſſible form, that they may be brought within the reach of thoſe who cannot conveniently purchaſe more expenſive publications:---If, therefore, the author wiſhes for an extenſive circulation of them, amongſt this claſs of perſons, it muſt be evident that he can be actuated by no other wiſh than that of promoting the peace, the comfort, and the happineſs of his fellow creatures. In the ſame ſpirit he has already addreſſed the Public, on the ſubject of our domeſtic diſtreſſes; and, dedicated as he is to promote the glory of God, and good-will amongſt mankind, he ſhall at all times, as his conſcience and judgement may direct him, be zealous in contributing his mite towards the general welfare.

SERMON I.

PROVERBS, xi. 26.

He that with-holdeth Corn, the people ſhall curſe him: But bleſſing ſhall be upon the head of him that ſelleth it.

THE mode of inſtruction adopted by the author of the Book of Proverbs is of the higheſt antiquity, and peculiarly adapted to the ſimplicity of the earlier ages. The wiſdom of experience is compreſſed into ſhort ſentences, which are as clear and diſtinct in their ſenſe, as they are eaſy to be retained in the memory. That part of the book, from whence the text is taken, contains maxims of practical application to common life in every age of the world, and on ſubjects of the utmoſt importance to mankind, in their connection with each other as ſocial beings.

I have ſelected the particular Proverb now before us, becauſe it ſtates a crime of the higheſt enormity, and contraſts it with a virtue of the moſt eſſential ſocial utility. It is the object of religion to make mankind virtuous and happy in this world, as well as to prepare them for the ſpiritual enjoyments of the next. To this end, the word of God not only reprehends ſin, and exhorts to virtue in general; but it alſo ſpecifies the heads of each, as they relate to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves; and details the ſeveral duties which attach to man in his ſeveral relations. Every crime and every virtue, therefore, which the inſpired writers have thought worthy of notice, is a proper ſubject of inſtruction from the miniſters of religion; and they will feel it incumbent to impreſs them upon their hearers, in proportion as they ſeem to bear upon the times in which they live. The preacher, therefore, has little apology to make for conſidering a ſubject, which is ſo intimately connected with ſocial morality; and in which the peace and comfort of every man who hears him are materially intereſted.

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The text, in the firſt place, ſtates a crime; "He that with-holdeth corn, the people ſhall curſe him." The word *corn* is to be conſidered as a common figure of ſpeech, which takes a part for the whole; and includes, in its enlarged ſenſe, all the neceſſaries of life. Before we can underſtand the whole extent of this crime, and the number of perſons who are comprehended in the guilt of it, it will be expedient to affix ſome general meaning to the term *neceſſaries of life*. The *natural* wants of man in a ſavage ſtate are few; and the abſolute neceſſaries of life include nothing but what is eſſential to the mere preſervation of his animal exiſtence; and all this is compatible with innumerable miſeries and hardſhips. But in a ſtate of ſociety and cultivation, the condition of man is materially changed. The plenty and improvement, which ſuch a ſtate produces, give him new wants and new habits, which, in the courſe of time, become as urgent and indiſpenſable as the firſt wants of his nature in a ſavage ſtate. To make this matter more intelligible; were you to hear of a fellow creature in this country, who was ſheltered from the winter's ſtorms by a hut raiſed with turf, and covered with boughs; and lying on a little ſtraw or ruſhes ſpread upon the damp earth; who was fed by the wild fruits of the woods, or the wild animals he might accidentally make his prey; and was clothed only with their unmanufactured ſkins, would you ſay that this man was poſſeſſed of the neceſſaries of life? ſurely not; and yet this is his habit of life in many regions of the earth in an uncivilized ſtate of nature. By the neceſſaries of life then are to be underſtood, not thoſe ornaments and luxuries which cannot be brought within the means of the maſs of the people in any ſtate of ſociety; but thoſe comforts and accommodations, in which the honeſt induſtrious poor man lays out his earnings in a civilized well regulated country, and which length of habit have made eſſential to any enjoyment of his exiſtence.

Having given this general idea of the neceſſaries of life, I come next to the conſideration of the crime in my text, viz. *with-holding* theſe neceſſaries.

This is, I. *a ſin againſt God*, becauſe it counteracts his paternal deſigns in ſupplying his creatures with "food convenient for them." The firſt gift of God to man was the produce of the earth for his ſupport; "and God ſaid, behold I "have given you every herb bearing ſeed, which is upon the "face of all the earth; and every tree in the which is the "fruit of a tree yielding ſeed: to you it ſhall be for meat."* Even after the abomination of ſin had defaced the beauty of God's faireſt work, and the depravity of mankind had pro-

* Geneſis i. 29.

voked

voked the divine wrath to nearly the extirpation of the human race, ſtill, when he permitted the world to be repeopled, his earlieſt care was for their adequate ſuſtenance. He ſays to Noah, (and in his perſon to all mankind throughout ſucceſſive ages,) "Every moving thing that liveth ſhall be meat for you; even "as the green herb, have I given you all things."* Whoever therefore ſhall ſtand between man and the divine bounty, whoever ſhall dare to intercept the channel of God's providential goodneſs, does in reality oppoſe himſelf to the Almighty, and in the *natural* world obſtructs the purpoſes of God, as Satan does in the *ſpiritual* world. Throughout the Moſaic diſpenſation, the moſt beautiful proviſions are made that the poor may be benefited by the improved cultivation of the earth; and every injunction of this kind is made more weighty by giving it this awful ſanction, "I am the Lord your "God." It is almoſt unneceſſary to remind you, that, throughout the Goſpel, charity is in almoſt every page inculcated as forming the moſt leading chriſtian virtue; and that to have fed the hungry is made the abſolutely indiſpenſable condition of Salvation at the bar of heaven. But in what ſenſe can *he* be ſaid to exerciſe benevolence, whoſe own aggrandiſement ariſes from the diſtreſſes of his fellow creatures? and in what chriſtian acceptation can *he* be ſaid to feed the hungry, who gives a caſual alms towards the imperfect relief of a calamity which he himſelf has contributed to produce?

II. The monopoly of the common neceſſaries and comforts of life is a *ſin againſt ſociety*. It aſſumes this character.

Firſt, by ſtriking at the fundamental principle of all ſociety, MUTUAL CONVENIENCE. The *wants* of mankind unite them in a ſocial ſtate. They ſubmit themſelves to laws and regulations, becauſe, in ſuch a ſtate of order, they find all the comforts of life more regularly ſupplied, and more ſecurely inſured to them. The firſt neceſſity, which brings man acquainted with man, is that of *food*. In uncivilized nations ſavages unite in tribes to procure for themſelves ſuſtenance, which their joint efforts produce for the benefit of all, to more certainty than the exertions of one could do for his own conſumption alone. In civilized ſtates, where luxury and elegance are carried to the higheſt imaginable degree of perfection,—where, to ſuperficial obſervation, conſiderably more than half the trades and occupations of men bear no relation to the neceſſaries of life; yet in fact the whole is carried on, on account of, and terminates in, the firſt object which connected uncivilized people together; viz. the encreaſe of human proviſion. A moral philoſopher, of the firſt reputation in this country, thus concludes his diſcuſſion of one article of the Elements of Political Knowledge;

* Geneſis ix. 3.

ledge; " Let it be remembered that agriculture is the immedi-
" ate ſource of human proviſion; that trade conduces to the
" production of proviſion only as it promotes agriculture: that
" the whole ſyſtem of commerce, vaſt and various as it is,
" hath no other public importance than its ſubſerviency to this
" end."—Paley, vol. ii. p. 375. Thus alſo individual proper-
ty, envious as we ſometimes are of its magnitude, is of great public advantage, as it ſecures the beſt poſſible cultivation and ſupply of the comforts and neceſſaries of life to the community at large. If this account be true of the motives, which originally brought, and ſtill keep, men together in ſociety,—if it be true that every trade and occupation is carried on to encreaſe the quantity of proviſion,---that the encreaſed quantity of proviſion proportionably encreaſes population,---and that an encreaſe of population is an encreaſe of public happineſs, in what character does he, who with-holds, or monopolizes the neceſſaries of life, ſtand towards ſociety? It is impoſſible to imagine a more malignant ſin againſt the general intereſt.---He declares a warfare againſt the human race:--He ſets up an intereſt of his own, not merely independent of his fellow creatures; but in direct oppoſition to their welfare, founded and built upon their miſeries: he is an enemy to every man, and every man, on principles of ſelf preſervation, muſt be an enemy to him. The enormity of his crime does not conſiſt merely in cruelty, oppreſſion, and hard heartedneſs; but it goes to the very ſubverſion of all ſociety, by ſtriking directly at its foundation. The ſatisfying thoſe wants, which firſt connected mankind together, is the principle on which they continue peaceable, orderly, and ſubmiſſive to laws. If thoſe wants can no longer be ſatisfied, they will ſeperate, and ſeek for their accuſtomed comforts in ſome other ſtate of things. This man, therefore, aiming a deadly blow at the whole ſtructure of ſociety, incurs the guilt of *every* crime againſt good order, by endeavouring to reduce the whole maſs to confuſion and anarchy.

2. This crime is a ſin againſt ſociety, as it is a violation of that juſtice and honeſty, which are the baſis of all honourable dealing. Perhaps there cannot be a more atrocious infringement of the plain command, " Thou ſhalt not ſteal." To lay hands, as it were, upon the proviſion of the community, for the purpoſe of returning it again to them in ſuch quantities as ſhall produce an exorbitant and diſproportionate profit, and at a rate above the means of thouſands, is a depredation upon the common ſtock, in compariſon of which all other thefts are petty offences. Let ſuch a perſon put to himſelf the queſtion, Whether he be an honeſt man? And ſurely conſcience has no

ſophiſtry

ſophiſtry ſo groſs as to leave him for a moment in doubt in this inſtance.

3. Avarice is too inſatiate and intent upon its object to liſten to conſiderations which might divert its purpoſe. Let ſuch a man, however, reflect upon the *unreaſonableneſs* of that ſelfiſhneſs, which induces him, for his own private advantage, to contribute to the diſtreſs of his fellow creatures. Is it poſſible to imagine a mode of gain ſo unnatural, as well as wicked, as to buy up or with-hold any neceſſary of life, that being ſcarce, it may become dear? Are there any words which can repreſent the arrogant ſelfiſhneſs of the man, who, ſeeing the people clamorous for food, argues thus, 'If the demand be thus ur-'gent, the price muſt neceſſarily be conſiderably higher; this, 'therefore, tho' the price even now is exorbitant, is not the 'time for me to ſell; they muſt ſtarve a little longer?' If he does not reaſon within himſelf in theſe preciſe words, it is nevertheleſs in *fact* the argument of every man who upholds or monopolizes any article of neceſſity; and ſurely it is a conduct ſo unreaſonable and unfair, that if any man can forfeit the *protection* of ſociety, it muſt be he, who is ſo umindful of the *intereſts* of ſociety.

4. Let him farther conſider the *impolicy* of it. Scarcity and dearneſs muſt ever produce diſcontent and murmuring. It is not in the power of all men to reaſon coolly and juſtly upon the true cauſes of public calamity; public complaint, therefore, is ſoon inflamed into public reſentment. The government is accuſed either of being the original cauſe of the diſtreſs, or of being inattentive to its remedy;---the rich are accuſed of luxury; and the trader in the ſeveral articles of monopoly. Accuſation breaks out into violence; and "The be-"ginning of ſtrife, (it is well ſaid by the author of my text) "is as when one letteth out water.*" How impolitic, therefore, is this man, for his own ſake, in augmenting the public diſcontent. What availeth him that he heapeth up riches, if he cannot enſure to himſelf the enjoyment of them? and he muſt know, that ſhould he be fortunate enough to eſcape the perſonal reſentment of the people, nevertheleſs that property which he has ſo wickedly accumulated, muſt periſh in the general wreck. Perhaps he may argue as ſome kind of apology, That if he does not take advantage of the circumſtances of the times, others will be found to do it. The argument, by which a man juſtifies himſelf for being a villain, becauſe other men may be villains, requires little refutation; it will ſerve the purpoſe of

* Proverbs, xvii. 14.

a houſe-

a houſe-breaker or a highwayman, as well as of him "that "with-holdeth corn," or other neceſſaries.

III. The laſt view I ſhall take ofthis crime is, *that it is a ſin againſt his own ſoul.* "Let him be ever ſo cunning, and ap- "pear for a while to thrive ever ſo faſt," yet remember the ſayings of the wiſe king: "An inheritance may be gotten haſ- "tily at the beginning; but the end thereof ſhall not be bleſſ- "ed *. Treaſures of wickedneſs profit nothing: but righ- "teouſneſs delivereth from death †. Wealth, gotten by va- "nity, ſhall be diminiſhed: but he that gathereth by labour, "ſhall encreaſe ‡." or ſhould the proſperity of ſuch perſons laſt as long as their lives; yet their lives may be cut ſhort. For what the prophet threatens, often comes to paſs, and is always to be feared: "He that getteth riches, and not by right, ſhall "leave them in the midſt of his days, and at his end ſhall be a "fool §." But ſhould his days on earth be extended to the utmoſt, yet the prophet alſo ſays, "the ſinner an hundred "years old ſhall be accurſed ‖." "For the unrighteous ſhall "not inherit the kingdom of God ¶; but the Lord is the "avenger of all ſuch **"—(Secker.) Now let the hateful character, we have been conſidering, reflect upon his condition in this world, and his expectations in the next. If he be known to with-hold or monopolize the neceſſaries of life, is there a human being who is followed with ſuch general and bitter execration? If he be protected from the fury of popular reſentment, nevertheleſs the curſe in my text falls upon him from every heart and every tongue. Even thoſe who are maintained in his employ,---the wife whoſe luxury is encreaſed by his extortion,---the children for whoſe fortunes he ſacrifices his ſoul, ---the dependants who are ſuſtained by his bounty,--even theſe, ---a man's own houſehold, deſpiſe him in their hearts, and own the juſtice of the general malediction. Callous as he may be to mercy, and dead to principle, he cannot but be alive to dreadful apprehenſion when the fatherleſs and the widow, the ſtarving poor, and the famiſhed children of the lowly cottage, rend the very heavens with their cries of injury, and in the agony of their hearts, implore the Judge of all the Earth to avenge their cauſe. Let him look forward to the dread hour of his diſſolution.—When in the diſmay of a death bed, he ſhall caſt his eyes around for ſuccour, Ah! where ſhall he find the conſolation of a prayer for his deſpairing ſoul, or a tear to embalm his memory.---Nay, muſt he not expect, that even the grave

* Prov. xv. 21. † Prov. x. 2. ‡ Prov. x. 11. § Jeremiah, xvii. 11. ‖ Isaiah, lxv. 20. ¶ 1 Cor. vi. 9. ** 1 Thes. iv. 6.

ſhall

ſhall not hide his crimes, or conciliate the pardon of the injured? Even when his aſhes are carried forth to the burial, and his body committed to the ground "Duſt to duſt,"---May not, even then, the curſe of the poor fall upon his coffin? Here let us draw a veil over his miſerable end; nor preſume to follow his ſoul into the world of ſpirits, to the judgement ſeat of Chriſt, where the righteous alone can appear in hope and joy.

Hitherto we have confined ourſelves to the conſideration of the crime, which is ſo emphatically mentioned in the firſt part of my text: we ought now to conſider the bleſſing which is alluded to in the ſecond part of it. Under this head will be properly included the reſpective duties of men in every order of ſociety. Unhappily, it is a ſubject, in which we are all of us, at preſent, too nearly intereſted; and, therefore, as the time will not now allow of it's ſerious conſideration, I ſhall call your attention to it on the following Sunday.

In the mean time, let me not be underſtood to inſinuate in the moſt diſtant manner, that the preſent diſtreſs originates with, or, is kept up by, the crime of monopoly. It is too melancholy a truth, which every diſpaſſionate man may eaſily convince himſelf of, that the radical cauſe of the calamity is to be traced in the unfavourableneſs of ſeaſons, and the viſitation of Providence. When we conſider the general coldneſs towards religion, and the numerous ſins of this nation,---the former bleſſings poured down upon us, and the ungrateful return we have made for them, we ought in deep humiliation to be ready to exclaim, we are juſtly puniſhed, becauſe of our offences. But, however ſevere may be the actual ſcarcity, doubtleſs, amongſt other circumſtances by which it may be aggravated, there will be found bad men to take advantage of the general calamity, like wretches who foment a conflagration for the ſake of plunder. The ſame reaſon, therefore, which makes the wiſe man's proverb intereſting in every age of the world, muſt particularly juſtify the practical utility of the ſubject at the hour in which we have been diſcuſſing it, and which the leſſon for the day * has particularly offered to our attention. To none can it give offence, but to thoſe whoſe conſciences accuſe them, (and may they deeply lay it to heart!) much leſs to the fair traders in the different neceſſaries of life, whoſe honourable conduct in their reſpective callings in times like theſe, will entitle them not only to the protection of the arm of government, but enable them to become eminent benefactors to their fellow creatures.

* 23d Sunday after Trinity.

SERMON

SERMON II.

PROVERBS xi. 26.

He that with-holdeth corn the people ſhall curſe him: But bleſſing ſhall be upon the head of him that ſelleth it.

IN my laſt Sunday's diſcourſe, I took an opportunity, from the firſt leſſon for the day, to conſider the crime of with-holding or monopolizing the neceſſaries of life. I, in the firſt place endeavoured to affix a general meaning to the term neceſſaries of life; and then conſidered the with-holding them in three different points of view, as a ſin againſt God—a ſin againſt ſociety, and a ſin againſt a man's own ſoul. Inaſmuch, however, as the ſubject might ſeem to apply to the circumſtances of our own times; I farther obſerved, that though there would always be ſome bad men to take advantage of general diſtreſs, and therefore at ſuch times the ſubject was peculiarly ſeaſonable; nevertheleſs, every diſpaſſionate man would eaſily convince himſelf, that we ſhall find the radical cauſe of the calamity which afflicts us beyond all human interference, in the providence of unfavourable ſeaſons, with which God hath viſited us, probably on account of thoſe manifold offences, which have juſtly provoked his wrath againſt us.

I now come to the ſecond part of my text, "But Bleſſing "ſhall be upon the head of him that ſelleth it."

As we took the word corn before in the enlarged ſenſe of all the neceſſaries of life; ſo under the character of "him that ſelleth it" muſt be included every man who, in his ſtation, contributes in any degree to the alleviation of the affliction. We muſt, therefore, for our mutual inſtruction in the government of our conduct, enquire into the reſpective duties of men, in every order of ſociety, in times of ſcarcity and diſtreſs.

In every emergency, the firſt and moſt natural reſource of the community is in *the parental care of the government*, which exiſts for the benefit of the whole. As far as this applies to our

our own caſe, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that it cannot but afford conſolation to all orders of people, and ought to enſure the preſervation of the public peace, that every branch of the legiſlature is intently employed in deviſing the means of leſſening the calamity. Men of all political principles here forget the violence of party, and cordially harmonize in their deliberations upon this important ſubject; ſo that we may fairly expect, in the councils of the legiſlature, and in the exertions of the executive government, all which human wiſdom can do in counteracting the avarice of the intereſted, and ſupplying the deficiencies of the ſeaſons. As however it is poſſible, that the promptneſs and deciſiveneſs of their meaſures, may not keep pace with the expectations of the ſanguine, or the wants of thoſe whoſe diſtreſſes are moſt urgent, let me not be accuſed of political digreſſion, while I am deſirous only of promoting peace and order, if I remind you of the extreme delicacy of the caſe in which the legiſlature is called upon to interfere. The importunity of preſent diſtreſs is apt to make us overlook the conſideration of future conſequences. To regulate the value, or to dictate the time, when any man ſhall bring forth his commodities for ſale, is, even if neceſſity makes it ſalutary, ſome infringement of the great natural right of all men to reap the utmoſt fruits of their own induſtry, and to direct the diſpoſal of their own property. Let the moſt zealous friends of liberty recollect, that this is one of the moſt ſacred rights for which they contend; let them recollect, that an arbitrary proceeding for the *public benefit*, may be forced into precedent in another caſe, and in other times, for the *public injury*; and that, therefore, on this ground, they ſhould be more inclined to reſpect the caution, than to accuſe the tardineſs, of public meaſures.

The next duty, which the community demands, and which is indeed the firſt required by the moral law of God, is from thoſe who are, in their reſpective callings, in any way concerned in *ſupplying the neceſſaries of life*. The duty here expected, wholly reſts upon HONESTY, in the liberal chriſtian acceptation of it. Every man who has any diſtinct notions of upright and honourable dealing, who underſtands the connection of property and trade with the public welfare, will acknowledge, that, in times of ſcarcity and diſtreſs, the community have claims upon his patriotiſm; that, to ſupport the character of a good member of ſociety, he is called upon to prove his diſintereſtedneſs, rather than to gratify his deſire of gain; and that in ſuch times he holds, as a *public truſt*, that calling, which in better times he purſued for *private advantage*. All contracted views ſhould now vaniſh; and the great rule, of doing as he would be done by, ought to be the meaſure of his juſtice, integrity, and uprightneſs in all his deal-

ings. He will perceive that the neceſſary articles of life are the moſt unwarrantable ſubjects of commercial ſpeculation; it is a ſpeculation upon the wants and miſeries of his fellow creatures, which, if ſucceſsful, produces only an affluence blaſted by the curſes of God and man; and if it fails, brings down a ruin unalleviated by pity, and aggravated by execration. In times of diſtreſs he will feel his conſequence and importance to ſociety, and beſt underſtand the value of that importance, by becoming a benefactor to it. Juſtice and integrity in his general dealings are, at all times, his indiſpenſable duties; but while he is furniſhing the poor with the articles of ſubſiſtence, at the beſt rate which the circumſtances of the times will poſſibly admit of, his juſtice and integrity aſſume all the beauties of benevolence, and he feels that he has laid up for himſelf a bleſſing from the God of Mercy, in times of happier aſpect. It is a melancholy fact, that even the moſt induſtrious and deſerving poor, whoſe means are the moſt inadequate, muſt, from the ſmallneſs of the quantities they can afford to purchaſe, and their wants requiring them often at the moſt unfavourable times, muſt, I ſay, procure their neceſſaries at the higheſt rate, and to the leaſt advantage. Let him then, whoſe occupation furniſhes any of theſe neceſſaries, conſider how completely it is in his power to acquire the bleſſing in my text, by counter-acting this great evil, and ſupplying their wants upon the beſt terms of his more opulent cuſtomers. Bleſſed be God! inſtances of this kind are very numerous in this heavy hour of our affliction. While ſome few depraved and deteſtable characters may be found to prey upon famine and miſery; I am convinced that much oftener God is glorified, and human nature exalted, by forbearance and generoſity in thoſe, whoſe own ſubſiſtence is drawn from dealing in articles of neceſſity.

In the great article of bread corn, individuals, in many diſtricts, who would form a large and noble catalogue, have lowered its price much nearer to the value of labour than the markets would afford; and have foregone conſiderably advanced prices to bring it within the means of the poor. I remember to have heard, in a particular inſtance, the poor expreſs themſelves, that the abundant crops of one perſon, in the late harveſt, were a bleſſing upon him for his goodneſs to them in their greateſt diſtreſs. Now, my brethren, let me appeal to you, do not your own feelings at this moment tell you that you had rather have this recorded in your favour in the book of life on the atteſtation of the poor and needy, than perform ſome dazzling action which ſhould be ſent down to poſterity in the gorgeous language of the moſt eloquent hiſtorian? yes, bleſſing, temporal and eternal, ſhall be upon the head of all theſe. It is

poſſible they may ſee by their ſide, inſtances of oppreſſion and hard heartedneſs in greater preſent proſperity, and rioting in gains which God has not ſanctified: The pſalmiſt witneſſed the ſame ſight, "I myſelf have ſeen the ungodly in great power, "and flouriſhing like a green Bay tree*." But what was the end? "I went by, and lo, he was gone; I ſought him, but "his place could no where be found†." Let them alſo remember that while they are foregoing a preſent advantage, they are at the ſame time not only laying up for themſelves an incorruptible treaſure in the heavens, but alſo an inheritable bleſſing for their children in this world. "The righteous ſhall inherit "the land, and dwell therein forever‡. I have been young (ſays "the Pſalmiſt again) and now am old; and yet ſaw I never the "righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging their bread§." Some actions may be more brilliant, but none more virtuous; ſome may more excite the applauſe of men, but none will more effectually attract the favour of God. Their value will be beſt underſtood when this world has the feweſt advantages to offer. In the pain and languor of ſickneſs, they ſhall afford conſolation and even delight,---in the diſmaying hour of death, they ſhall diffuſe ſerenity and hope over the ſoul. When ſuch a man is carried forth to his grave, the lamentations of the poor ſhall follow his bier, and their grateful ſighs ſhall accompany his ſoul into the preſence of his God and Saviour. Their tears ſhall mingle with the mould, which falls upon his coffin.---"Earth to "Earth,"---and moiſten the green turf which covers his grave. On his tomb ſhall be inſcribed the beſt Epitaph, which virtue can hope for, or Genius can inſpire. "The bleſſing of him "that was ready to periſh came upon me‖!" And in the day when the Archangel's trumpet ſhall rend the tomb, and call the dead from the graves, this bleſſing ſhall be awarded to him, from the judgement ſeat of Heaven, in the preſence of all the nations of the world from the beginning of time.

We come now to the duties which generally attach to all the members of the community at large. And here let it be obſerved, that no man is ſo inconſiderable in the ſcale of ſociety, as not to have ſome mite to contribute towards the welfare and preſervation of the whole. In conſidering this part of the ſubject, we may divide the maſs of the community into two great claſſes, viz. *thoſe whoſe birth, ſtation, or opulence, have occaſioned habits of elegance, luxury, and ſuperfluity; and thoſe whoſe humble ſituations and ſcanty means oblige them to be contented with the bare comforts of civilized life.*

* Pſalm, xxxvii. 36. † V. 37. ‡ V. 38, § Pſalm xxxvii, 25.
‖ Job. xxix. 13.

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With reſpect to the firſt great diviſion of perſons, it cannot be too ſtrongly inculcated, that every principle of ſelf-preſervation and public duty, every obligation as men and citizens, every conſideration, which appeals to the heart, calls upon them to abate, in the article more eſpecially of proviſions, expences which are incurred merely for the purpoſes of diſſipation, which have no connection with the neceſſities, and God knows not much with the comforts of life. If we would guard againſt the dreadful calamity of famine, or what is nearly as bad, depredation, inſurrection, and anarchy, we muſt content ourſelves with ſufficiency without waſte; and ſacrifice our vanity to retain our more ſubſtantial comforts. Few are the neceſſaries upon which the poor depend for their ſubſiſtence; but the other orders of ſociety, in proportion to their opulence, have a wider field to range in for their ſupport. It is incumbent then upon every man, who thinks himſelf entitled to ſuperfluities, to conſider what are the articles of the firſt neceſſity, and to retrench the uſe of them in his family, that at all events they may be fairly within the reach of thoſe, who have no alternative but to poſſeſs them, or to periſh. He, who has the choice of *many* articles of proviſions, ſhould, in times of ſcarcity, ſcrupulouſly abſtain from, or at leaſt parſimoniouſly make uſe of that, which is the *only* ſolitary choice of a large portion of his fellow creatures. In ſeaſons of general plenty, the liberal enjoyment of the good things with which Providence hath ſpread the table of the univerſe, ſo far from being a crime, may perhaps contribute to the public wealth and proſperity: But when nature denies its gifts, and neceſſaries become luxuries of difficult attainment, the moſt ſtupid cannot be inſenſible to the criminality of waſte. Let us then, my brethren, ſeparately ſcrutinize the habits of ourſelves, and of our families, and ſhall we not almoſt all of us find, that we either conſume, or are inſtrumental in conſuming, directly, or indirectly, ſome article, the abſolute privation of which would conſtitute famine? We are too apt to delude ourſelves with a kind of ſophiſtry, which indeed would be too flimſy to delude us, had we not behind ſome motive which we chuſe not to avow, viz. That our private conſumption of any article is too inſignificant to affect the general ſtock. It is an argument, which ſo obviouſly carries its own refutation, that it ſhould ſeem a waſte of your time to remark upon it. In morals there can be no general amendment without individual reformation: And in the inſtance before us, there can be no public œconomy without private retrenchment. Whoever, therefore, in ſeaſons of threatening dearth, wilfully perſiſts in the ſuperfluous conſumption of any article of neceſſity, does in fact partake of the curſe in the firſt

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part of my text upon him, who with-holds or monopolizes the neceſſaries of life. The diſtreſs of the moment may perhaps require only abſtinence in thoſe inſtances in which the diſtreſs principally exiſts: But I feel that I am recommending a great national virtue, a virtue eſſential to the very life of religion, eſſential to the temporal happineſs of thouſands, when I recommend GENERAL FRUGALITY. Philoſophical reflection, and hiſtorical experience prove, beyond contradiction, that the fall of empires is to be attributed to the increaſe of *luxury*: let us conſult the pure and ſimple morality of the Chriſtian Religion, and we ſhall find its influence diminiſh with the progreſs of *luxury*; let us viſit the ſcenes of private life, and what a deſolation of domeſtic peace has *luxury* occaſioned! I mean not, in this place, to inſiſt upon luxury, as it deſtroys political independence, or as it aſſimilates with the ornamented and ſenſual idolatry of ancient Rome in its decline, rather than with the ſimple religion of Jeſus Chriſt; but ſure I am that the luxury of this country has tempted thouſands of private families beyond the limits of their incomes: And therefore I would hold out to them the preſent moment, as that which affords them the apology for honourable retrenchment, without expoſing them even to the falſe feelings of imaginary degradation.

The other great diviſion of perſons, who come under the general appellation of *the poor*, have likewiſe duties appropriate to their ſtation, which it becomes them to unite with the general exertion in the common cauſe. God forbid! that I ſhould mock the miſeries of thoſe, who after every effort of toil and induſtry cannot procure ſubſiſtence, much leſs the other neceſſaries of life at their advanced value, for themſelves and their families. Such inſtances, it is to be feared, are too frequent, more eſpecially as the ſeverities of winter overtake them, amongſt thoſe who depend for their ſupport, upon the lower departments of manual labour. Moſt urgent indeed is their caſe; and it cannot be, but that either the value of labour, the liberality of parochial relief, or private munificence, muſt be brought to a due proportion to their actual neceſſities.

Still, however, there are great numbers, whoſe wages, in the different branches of arts and manufactures, bear a much nearer proportion to the increaſed value of every article of human ſubſiſtence. Theſe, therefore, can hardly wiſh to be exempted from their ſhare of general duty. We ſay to the affluent in times of public diſtreſs, you muſt ſet conſpicuous examples of frugality and œconomy in your more enlarged ſpheres: May we not alſo ſay to him, who works for his daily bread, you have likewiſe eſpecial need, as the neceſſaries and comforts of life become more enhanced, to take care that your earnings are actually expended in nothing but what are real

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neceſſaries and comforts?---In the middle claſſes of perſons, as their families and unavoidable expences increaſe, ſo every exertion of their minds and bodies are in the ſame proportion increaſed to provide for their ſupport. Ought not, likewiſe, the workman, and the manufacturer, if his time has not been before wholly employed, to increaſe his induſtry with his wants, more eſpecially if his emolument be in proportion to his labour? Has *he* a right to complain of the diſtreſſes of the times, who can afford, beſide the dedication of the ſabbath to reſt and devotion, to ſacrifice a part of every week to idleneſs or amuſement? Can *he* complain of the luxury and the waſtefulneſs of the rich, who not only voluntarily loſes the earnings of a day, but adds the expence of ſome idle gratification? Surely no one in any ſtation has a right to complain, 'till he has conſcientiouſly contributed to the beſt of his judgement, his full ſhare of duty to himſelf and to ſociety, towards removing the grievance. No truth can be more aſſured, than that the general happineſs of every people will be in proportion to their general induſtry. In the worſt times induſtry alone can leſſen their miſeries; and in the beſt times which the world ever yet ſaw, without induſtry, ſo far from finding happineſs, they can experience nothing but the ſevereſt miſery.

More eſpecially does it become me as a miniſter of the goſpel of peace, to exhort all men, rich and poor, *to ſubmiſſion to the laws, to quietneſs and good order.* This doctrine, however, forbids not the voice of juſt complaint, which is the birth-right of man, and which the conſtitution of this country has better ſecured than that of any other. Virtuous and honeſt complaint is ever moderate and reſpectful; turbulence tends to confuſion, but never brings about redreſs; and in the particular inſtance of public ſcarcity, which we at this moment ſo deeply deplore, the hiſtory of all ages informs us that riot and inſurrection never fail to aggravate the evil,--that they obſtruct the good deſigns of thoſe who are engaged in leſſening the calamity,---and that they offer no one advantage to counterbalance this fatal miſchief. Perhaps no better advice can be offered for our conduct in evil times, than that of St. Paul to the Theſſalonians, "We beſeech "you, brethren, that ye ſtudy to be quiet, and to do your own "buſineſs, and to work with your own hands, as we command-"ed you; that ye may walk honeſtly toward them that are "without, and that ye may have lack of nothing *."

The duties hitherto inculcated, are thoſe of ſocial morality. It has been obſerved, however, that the radical cauſe of the calamity, which afflicts us, is beyond all human interference, in the viſitation of God, on account of thoſe manifold offences,

* 1 Theſſalonians, iv. 11. 12.

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which have juſtly provoked his wrath againſt us. We ſhall find throughout the Prophets, that the failure of harveſts, and all the miſeries of dearth and famine, are threatened as a warning, or inflicted as a puniſhment, in times of general impiety and wickedneſs. Thus Jeremiah, after having upbraided the impenitence of the jews, and bewailed their calamity, laments in language, in which we ourſelves are too nearly intereſted, "The harveſt is paſt, the ſummer is ended, and we are not ſaved*." The prophet Joel ſhews us the pernicious conſequences of national ſins upon God's own people in droughts, locuſts, and famine: "The field is waſted, the land mourneth; for the corn is waſted†." He alſo points out the methods by which the Almighty may be prevailed upon to take off his judgments; "Sanctify ye a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly, gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land, into the houſe of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord, Alas! for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a deſtruction from the almighty ſhall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladneſs from the houſe of our God? The ſeed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid deſolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered‡." That ſuch humiliation for national iniquities, accompanied with ſincere repentance will be accepted, God himſelf vouchſafes to aſſure us. "Therefore alſo now," ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil. Then the Lord will anſwer and ſay unto his people, Behold I will ſend you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye ſhall be ſatisfied therewith§." O, that the people of this land may have the wiſdom to underſtand the value of thoſe bleſſings, which the Almighty hath hitherto beſtowed upon us above all other lands; ---that they may feel in deep contrition the ingratitude of the return which they have made;---that they may confeſs, and turn away from all their iniquities;---that while "judgements are in the earth the people may learn righteouſneſs‖."

O God, who in wrath remembereſt mercy, look down upon this people whom hitherto thou haſt delighted to bleſs, and withdraw not thy protection from us. "Thine hand, O Lord, is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave; neither thine ear heavy, that it cannot hear¶." We confeſs the multitude and enor-

* Jeremiah, viii. 20. † Joel, i. 10 ‡ Joel, i. 14, 15, 16, 17.
§ Joel, ii. 12, 13, 19. ‖ Iſaiah, xxvi. 9. ¶ Iſaiah, lix. 1.

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mity of our ſins: We acknowledge, "O Lord, that thy "judgements are right, and that thou of very faithfulneſs, haſt "cauſed us to be troubled *:" We proſtrate ourſelves before thee in contrition and repentance; accept therefore, we implore thee, our ſorrow, pardon our offences, and bleſs us "as "in the days of old, and as in former years†." Preſerve, we beſeech thee, our gracious Sovereign; long may he reign over theſe kingdoms, happy in the affections, and happy in the proſperity of his people. Give, we beſeech thee, repoſe to the afflicted nations of the earth. While thou puniſheſt us, may we have the grace and the wiſdom to ſubmit to thy holy chaſtiſement: But ſtay now, we implore thee, thine arm, and take off the ſcourge. Let "the nations beat their ſwords into plough-"ſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks‡;" let "the val-"leys once more ſtand ſo thick with corn that they ſhall ſeem to "laugh and ſing §;" and let us again "ſit every man under his "vine and under his fig tree, and none ſhall make us afraid‖." Give bleſſing to the king, and chearful proſperity to the loweſt ſubject; and thus, once more become a happy and a virtuous people, may we,---our children, and our children's children from generation to generation, praiſe and glorify thy holy name, 'till time ſhall be no more!

* Pſalm cxix. 75. † Malachi iii. 4. ‡ Iſaiah ii. 4.
§ Pſalm lxv. 14. ‖ Micah iv. 4.

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